

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, a  
Washington state agency; THE CENTER FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WASHINGTON, a research center created by  
state law; and ANGELINA GODOY, director of  
the Center for Human Rights at the University of  
Washington;

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
HOMELAND SECURITY; and UNITED  
STATES IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS  
ENFORCEMENT;

Defendants.

Case No. 2:22-cv-1329

**COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY  
RELIEF FOR VIOLATING FOIA**

Plaintiffs, the University of Washington, the Center for Human Rights at the University of  
Washington, and Doctor Angelina Godoy (collectively “UWCHR” or “Plaintiffs”), allege as  
follows:

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Plaintiffs bring this action under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5  
U.S.C. § 552 et seq., as amended, to enjoin the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) and  
Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE” and together with DHS, the “DHS Defendants”)

1 from continuing to improperly withhold agency records concerning federal immigration  
2 enforcement in Washington State.

3         2.         Since 2019, UWCHR has submitted numerous FOIA requests to ICE but has been  
4 stonewalled and frustrated at every turn in its attempt to obtain what should be—and is  
5 statutorily required to be—publicly available documents and information.

6         3.         The documents sought through UWCHR's FOIA requests are essential to its  
7 function and mandate from the Washington State Legislature—to generate research data that  
8 enhances public and private policymaking with respect to identifying and addressing human  
9 rights abuses around the world, as well as here in Washington State, including those occurring at  
10 the hands of our own government.

11         4.         These documents—improperly withheld by ICE—would shed light on credible  
12 reports and accounts of human rights abuses taking place during the detention and deportation of  
13 families and children. For instance, children have been separated from and processed separately  
14 from their parents here in Washington, and in other instances reportedly going for extended  
15 periods without adequate food, water, or shelter while in ICE's custody. In other instances,  
16 individuals being detained and deported by ICE and its contract partners have been subject to  
17 beatings, medical neglect, sexual assault, and other conduct that amounts to torture.

18         5.         The documents UWCHR seeks through its FOIA requests would shine a light on  
19 all of these accounts of human rights abuses, as well as other information that could reveal trends  
20 in ICE's enforcement and detention practices, to help UWCHR and the public at large become  
21 aware of the human rights abuses taking place in our immigration system. UWCHR does not  
22 seek disclosure of information revealing current intelligence methods or any other sensitive and  
23 properly classified matters. Such information, if it exists, may be segregated or redacted from the  
24 documents that UWCHR believes are being unlawfully withheld by ICE.

25         6.         But UWCHR has been foiled in its attempts to shine its light. For a large majority  
26 of its requests, UWCHR has received conflicting and confusing communications from ICE, and  
27 the investigations are summarily closed without explanation. Most often, ICE falsely claims that

1 documents have been delivered in response to a FOIA request when in fact UWCHR has  
2 received zero documents of any kind. UWCHR has reached out to ICE regarding these summary  
3 closures, but ICE remains silent. For other requests, ICE's produced documents are so heavily  
4 redacted that they are useless as information sources.

5 7. In UWCHR's informal attempts to cooperate with ICE in information gathering,  
6 ICE has told UWCHR that ICE "won't be able to assist you with your requests for information."  
7 This, combined with ICE's failure to properly respond—or even respond at all—to UWCHR's  
8 FOIA requests means that UWCHR has no recourse but to seek the Court's intervention,  
9 requiring ICE to fulfill its statutory obligations under FOIA.

### 10 JURISDICTION

11 8. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B)  
12 and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

### 13 VENUE

14 9. Venue in the Western District of Washington is proper under 5 U.S.C.  
15 § 552(a)(4)(B). Independently, venue is proper in the Western District of Washington because all  
16 Plaintiffs reside in Seattle, Washington.

### 17 PARTIES

18 10. Plaintiff, the University of Washington, is a Washington State agency and the  
19 state's largest public research university. Its primary business offices are in Seattle, Washington.

20 11. Plaintiff, the Center for Human Rights at University of Washington, is an  
21 organization within the University of Washington. The Washington Legislature created the  
22 Center for Human Rights in 2009 to expand opportunities for Washington residents to receive a  
23 world-class education in human rights, generate research data and expert knowledge to enhance  
24 public and private policymaking, and to be an academic center for human rights teaching and  
25 research. The Center for Human Rights focuses on, among other things, the rights of all persons  
26 to security against violence. Its offices are in Seattle, Washington.

12. Plaintiff, Angelina Godoy, Ph.D., is the Director of the Center for Human Rights. Dr. Godoy resides in Seattle, Washington.

13. Defendant United States Department of Homeland Security is a federal agency within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a(a)(1).

14. Defendant United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement is a federal agency within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a(a)(1).

## **FACTS**

### **UWCHR'S FOIA REQUESTS TO THE DHS DEFENDANTS**

15. Since 2019, UWCHR has sent the DHS Defendants numerous FOIA requests seeking documents relevant to the human rights impact of federal immigration enforcement in Washington State. Here, Plaintiffs object to the handling (or mishandling) of sixteen of these requests. In response to these sixteen requests, the DHS Defendants have responded by: (1) acknowledging receipt of the FOIA request but then missing statutory deadlines to produce documents; (2) misapplying FOIA exemptions by improperly redacting information that should not have been redacted; or (3) summarily, and without explanation, closing investigations in response to FOIA requests by failing to acknowledge appeals to past determinations, failing to make any appeal determinations, or denying an appeal without providing any reasoning.

#### **A. DHS Defendants Have Missed Statutory Deadlines to Produce Documents**

##### **1. Enforcement Data: I-213s (FOIA Request ICE0243)**

16. On December 6, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

Seeking digital copies of draft, unsigned I-213 "Record of Deportable/Inadmissible Alien" forms, with corresponding I-247 "Continuation Form", for all apprehensions in the Seattle Area of Responsibility for the time period from April 1, 2020, through November 30, 2021. We do not object to redaction of any personally-identifiable information including name, date of birth, A#, U.S. address, etc.

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as "ICE0243."

17. The I-213 forms and I-247 forms sought through this request would provide the most accurate known representation of ICE and Customs and Border Patrol arrests in Washington State and the Seattle area. Similar FOIA requests covering earlier time periods has been central to UWCHR's research and identification of specific enforcement practices and patterns that may violate applicable law regarding collaboration and information-sharing between ICE and local and state government agencies.

18. On December 6, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0243 and provided a tracking number (2022-ICFO-02878).

19. DHS's FOIA website,<sup>1</sup> as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of ICE0243 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of January 10, 2022.

20. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0243.

21. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0243.

**2. Enforcement Data: Nationwide Individual Detention Histories (FOIA Request ICE0248)**

22. On March 11, 2022, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE, hereinafter referred to as "ICE0248," which sought detention history records from ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations - Law Enforcement Systems and Analysis ("ERO-LESA") Statistical Tracking Unit for individuals in immigration detention nationwide from October 1, 2011, to the present, specifying the fields of requested data to reflect the same types of information that had been produced in response to previous FOIA requests.

23. This data is essential to UWCHR's efforts to conduct a detailed analysis of ICE's nationwide detention population over time, which forms the backbone of much of its research into ICE's enforcement and detention patterns and trends.

<sup>1</sup> See Department of Homeland Security Freedom of Information Act Public Access Portal, *available at* <https://foiarequest.dhs.gov/app/CheckStatus.aspx>.

24. On March 11, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0248 and provided a tracking number (2022-ICFO-09022).

25. DHS's FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of ICE0248 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of April 16, 2022.

26. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0248.

27. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0248.

**3. Enforcement Data: Nationwide Enforcement Statistics (FOIA Request ICE0249)**

28. On March 11, 2022, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE, hereinafter referred to as "ICE0249." The request sought information from the ERO-LESA Statistical Tracking Unit regarding nationwide records of encounters, arrests, and removals from October 1, 2011, to the present, specifying the fields of requested data to reflect the same types of information that had been produced in response to previous FOIA requests.

29. This data, like that sought through ICE0248, is essential to UWCHR's efforts to conduct a detailed analysis of ICE's nationwide detention population over time, which forms the backbone of much of its research into ICE's enforcement and detention patterns and trends.

30. On March 11, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0249 and provided a tracking number (2022-ICFO-09023).

31. DHS's FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of ICE0249 is "Assigned or Processing" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of April 16, 2022.

32. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0249.

33. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0249.

**4. Air Deportations: Contracts for Air Charter Services (FOIA Requests  
ICE0045 and ICE00250)**

34. On February 10, 2019, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

I am seeking a copy of all contracts signed between ICE-ERO's ICE Air Operations Division (IAO) and charter companies for daily scheduled large aircraft flights, special high-risk charter missions, and other removal missions, between January 1, 2009 and January 1, 2019

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as "ICE0045."

35. According to a United States Government Accountability Office ("GAO") March 2020 report to Congress, "ICE issues agency-wide policies, such as memos and directives, which are to be followed by ICE personnel, but are not applicable to contracted staff unless noted in their contract or agreement."

36. Thus, UWCHR submitted ICE0045 to learn what precautions, if any, contractors and contracted staff are required to take to ensure the safety of passengers and crew on deportation flights.

37. UWCHR's research has revealed multiple credible reports of egregious violence against individuals while they are on ICE deportation flights operated by private charters under direct contract with DHS. This violence has included beating, kicking, choking, and the bundling of detainees in full-body restraints under conditions that constitute torture.

38. On March 3, 2019, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0045 and provided a tracking number (2019-ICFO-29524).

39. On October 7, 2019, after more than seven months of silence from DHS Defendants, UWCHR checked DHS's FOIA website to find that it indicated an "Estimate Delivery Date" of March 16, 2019. UWCHR sent further email inquiries to ICE asking for a status update on January 22, 2020, and October 7, 2020, but received no response.

40. Finally, on January 4, 2021, ICE responded, indicating that it had closed its investigation into ICE0045 on September 10, 2019. (ICE's claim that it closed the matter on

September 10, 2019, is not consistent with the October 7, 2019, status for this request on DHS's FOIA website, which stated that the estimated delivery date was March 16, 2019.)

41. On March 20, 2021, UWCHR filed an administrative appeal of ICE's conclusion that it possessed no responsive records and concurrent closure.

42. On March 23, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of the appeal and assigned it a tracking number (2021-ICAP-00509).

43. DHS's FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of this appeal of ICE0045 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of April 24, 2021.

44. As of the filing of this Complaint, UWCHR has not been notified of any determination with respect to this appeal, and ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0045.

45. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0045.

46. On May 6, 2022, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE that repeated the request made in ICE0045, but which extended the applicable dates to extend to the present. This updated request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as "ICE0250."

47. On May 6, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0250 and provided a tracking number (2022-ICFO-15055).

48. DHS's FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of ICE0250 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of June 12, 2022.

49. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0250.

50. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0250.

**5. Air Deportations: 2017 Classic Air Charter Contract Modifications (FOIA Request ICE0245)**

51. On February 1, 2022, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request sought:



1 All documents relating to contract modifications number P00061 and P00062 to  
 2 contract # GS33F004DA-70CDCR18FR0000002 between Immigration and  
 Customs Enforcement (DHS) and Classic Air Charter. (Date Range for Record  
 Search: From 01/01/2022 To 01/31/2022)

3 This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0245.”

4 52. ICE’s contract with Classic Air Charter (“CAC”) has been modified at least  
 5 twenty-eight times since April 2020 with the following stated justification: “guaranteed  
 6 minimum values have been temporarily adjusted to maintain vendor operability during Covid-19  
 7 pandemic.” The reference to “guaranteed minimum values” suggests ICE’s contract with CAC  
 8 contains guaranteed minimums, analogous to ICE detention contracts, whereby the contractor  
 9 received payment for a given minimum quantity of services, regardless of the actual number  
 10 provided. However, unlike guaranteed minimums in detention contracts, which are explained and  
 11 justified in DHS’s budget requests to Congress, guaranteed minimums in contracts with  
 12 chartered air services are not mentioned in any publicly available documents and merit further  
 13 investigation through FOIA requests such as ICE0245.

14 53. On February 1, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0245 and provided a  
 15 tracking number (2022-ICFO-06574).

16 54. DHS’s FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of  
 17 ICE0245 is “Assigned or Processing” and “Estimate Delivery Date” of March 8, 2022.

18 55. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents  
 19 responsive to ICE0245.

20 56. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0245.

21 **6. Air Deportations: Specific Deportation Flight Incident Investigations (FOIA**  
 22 **Requests ICE0197, ICE0237, and ICE0238)**

23 57. On October 31, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA  
 24 request to ICE. The request stated:

25 I am seeking copies of all incident investigations and their pertaining  
 26 documentation that the contractor Classic Air Charter Inc. and its subcontractors  
 27 provided to their ICE Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for services  
 performed under delivery order GS33F004DA-70CDCR18FR0000002 from

October, 2017, to the present, as mandated by ICE Air Operations Division Daily Charter Flight Services Statement of Work. The aforementioned work statement, attached here for your convenience, (on p. 19) mandates that the contractor is responsible for fully cooperating with ICE on all incident investigations as requested of them by sharing limited technical data, statements, timelines, training documents, and photographs. Statements of work for daily charter flights similar to the one provided are available on GovTribe here: <https://govtribe.com/file/government-file/hscecr17q00003-daily-charter-fy2017-21-tosow-sources-sought-draft-10272016-dot-docx>. I ask that the names of all personnel and individuals mentioned within the documents be excluded to protect the privacy of their personal and medical information. Please provide these records in electronic form.

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0197.”

58. Detailed reporting is required under the terms of the contracts between ICE and the contractors who provide chartered air services for deportation flights. Through ICE0197, UWCHR seeks to investigate whether ICE enforces these reporting requirements to ensure that deportation flights are performed in accordance with ICE’s stated safety standards.

59. On October 31, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0197 and provided a tracking number (2022-ICFO-01365).

60. DHS’ FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of ICE0197 is “In Process” and “Estimate Delivery Date” of December 6, 2021.

61. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0197.

62. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0197.

63. On December 3, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE, hereinafter referred to as “ICE0237.” The request sought incident reports prepared by ICE deportation flight third-party contractors with respect to incidents of documented mechanical issues and human rights abuses that took place during ICE Air Operations (“IAO”) flights with mission numbers 120801, 141717, 160678, 170131, 171129, 180635, 180716, and 180954.

64. The requested reports were referenced in a draft Statement of Work (“SOW”) for Daily Chartered Flight Services, which was attached to ICE0237 and which is publicly

1 available.<sup>2</sup> These reports would offer valuable insight into incidents of abuse reported on the  
 2 specified flight numbers, giving UWCHR and the public at large an opportunity to corroborate  
 3 independent accounts of abuse with internal reporting.

4 65. On December 3, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0237 and provided a  
 5 tracking number (2022-ICFO-02736).

6 66. DHS' FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of  
 7 ICE0237 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of January 9, 2022.

8 67. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents  
 9 responsive to ICE0237.

10 68. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0237.

11 69. On December 3, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA  
 12 request to ICE, hereinafter referred to as "ICE0238." The request, related to ICE0237, seeks  
 13 documents related to incident investigations conducted by ICE for same IAO flights, namely,  
 14 flights with mission numbers 120801, 141717, 160678, 170131, 171129, 180635, 180716, and  
 15 180954. These investigations are also referenced in the SOW for Daily Chartered Flight  
 16 Services, which was also attached to ICE0238.

17 70. These ICE-conducted investigations are distinct from reports produced or  
 18 provided by ICE deportation flight third-party contractors, as requested in ICE0237. Documents  
 19 responsive to ICE0238 would enable UWCHR to corroborate reports of human rights abuses  
 20 taking place on ICE deportation flights and to determine whether ICE conducts sufficient  
 21 investigations after reports of any such abuses provided by its third-party contractors.

22 71. On December 3, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0238 and provided a  
 23 tracking number (2022-ICFO-02736).

24 72. DHS' FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of  
 25 ICE0238 is "In Process" and "Estimate Delivery Date" of January 9, 2022.

26  
 27 <sup>2</sup> Available at <https://govtribe.com/file/government-file/hscecr17q00003-daily-charter-fy2017-21-tosow-sources-sought-draft-10272016-dot-docx>.

73. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0238.

74. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0238.

**B. DHS Defendants Have Misapplied FOIA Exemptions**

**1. Air Deportations: ARTS Flights Database (FOIA Request ICE0093)**

75. On April 25, 2020, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0093.”

76. On April 27, 2020, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0093 and provided a tracking number (2020-ICFO-35862).

77. On May 5, 2020, ICE emailed UWCHR seeking clarification and a reduction in scope of UWCHR’s original request.

78. On May 6, 2020, UWCHR emailed ICE to amend ICE0093 by providing more specific and targeted search language, which stated:

I am seeking data in its native electronic format from the Alien Repatriation Tracking System (ARTS) Missions and Passengers databases regarding all flights operated by ICE from October 1, 2018 to the present day, including the date of travel; origin or destination airport; mission stops; carrier, flight number, and tail number; gang member; criminality; country of citizenship; mission costs; and status. We are not interested in personally identifiable information such as name or A number of any detainees.

79. UWCHR’s May 6 clarification also referenced three previous similar FOIA requests, and ICE’s responses thereto, as exemplary of what UWCHR sought through ICE0093.

80. On October 7, 2020, UWCHR visited DHS’s FOIA website to check the status of this request and discovered that it was listed as having been closed on September 18, 2020, even though UWCHR had received no correspondence about its closure. Dr. Godoy emailed ICE asking that if the matter had indeed been closed, then she be informed as to the reason for its closure.

81. On November 12, 2020, ICE emailed UWCHR, attaching a response letter (dated September 18, 2020); on November 16, 2020, UWCHR received two heavily redacted spreadsheets in the mail, on a compact disc.

1           82. Information reflecting the mission pick-up, drop-off, start, stop, and end locations,  
2 as well as mission tail numbers, was redacted pursuant to the FOIA exemption provided in 5  
3 U.S.C. § 552(b)(7)(E), which exempts the disclosure of law enforcement information that would  
4 reveal investigation techniques and which would risk circumvention of the law.

5           83. Information reflecting mission costs, general flight costs, and mission total costs,  
6 was redacted pursuant to the FOIA exemption provided in 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), which exempts  
7 the disclosure of confidential financial information obtained from a person or individual.

8           84. On November 18, 2020, UWCHR submitted an appeal, outlining why ICE's  
9 redaction of the information in question under exemptions (b)(7)(E) and (b)(4) was a  
10 misapplication of those exemptions. The information redacted pursuant to exemption (b)(7)(E)  
11 was improperly redacted because it posed no risk of circumvention of the law. The information  
12 redacted pursuant to exemption (b)(4) was improperly redacted because substantially similar  
13 information had been released in response to other FOIA requests with respect to other ICE Air  
14 missions, so this information should not have been deemed "confidential." *See id.*

15           85. On November 20, 2020, ICE acknowledged receipt of UWCHR's appeal of ICE's  
16 determination on ICE0093 and provided a tracking number (2020-ICAP-00182).

17           86. On December 31, 2020, ICE issued a final determination of the appeal, upholding  
18 all redactions. This determination did not address UWCHR's argument that the flight  
19 information would not pose a risk of circumvention of the law, and it did not explain why the  
20 redacted financial information should be treated as "confidential" or how its disclosure would  
21 cause "substantial harm" to the competitive position of the person or entity who submitted the  
22 information.

**C. DHS Defendants Have Summarily “Closed” Investigations Into Numerous FOIA Requests and Ignored or Denied Appeals of These Closures Without Explanation.**

**1. Appeal Unacknowledged: Significant Incident Reports for ICE’s Seattle Field Office (FOIA Request ICE0090)**

87. On April 7, 2020, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated: “We request copies of all significant incident reports for ICE’s Seattle field office created on or after March 1, 2020.” This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0090.”

88. According to DHS Office of Inspector General, Significant Incident Reports (“SIR”) are used to document the narrative of any significant events that occur on duty. UWCHR has submitted past FOIA requests for SIRs to ICE, which have resulted in the production of SIRs that proved extremely fruitful to UWCHR’s research into human rights concerns regarding sexual abuse, hunger strikes, suicide attempts, and deaths of detainees while in ICE custody.

89. On April 9, 2020, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0090 and provided a tracking number (2020-ICFO-32497). This letter indicated that the request would be handled by the DHS Privacy Office.

90. On April 13, 2020, UWCHR received a letter from the DHS privacy office, again acknowledging receipt of ICE0090, and granting a request for expedited treatment. The DHS Privacy office provided a new tracking number (2020-HQFO-00885).

91. On August 21, 2020, DHS produced one document in response to ICE0090, which was heavily redacted, citing exemptions b(6) and (b)(7).

92. Subsequently, on August 21, 2020, UWCHR submitted an administrative appeal challenging the redaction decision.

93. This appeal has not been acknowledged by DHS or ICE, and no tracking number has been provided.

**2. Appeal Unacknowledged: Information On Unaccompanied Children and Separated Families (FOIA Request ICE0128)**

94. On February 10, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

Please provide the number of unaccompanied children and family units held in ICE custody in the Seattle AOR the location where they were held and the book-in and book-out dates in each location in the Seattle AOR, during FYs 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 to date. We understand, from the ICE ERO document “Transportation Services for Unaccompanied Children Statement of Work,” released under FOIA, that this information is stored in the Enforcement Alien Booking Manual. We are not interested in any personally-identifiable information about any detainees and ask that their names, A-numbers, or other PII be redacted to protect their privacy.

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0128.”

95. UWCHR researchers have identified records relating to family units, including juveniles, which had been separated by ICE during the processing of individuals to be deported. After being divided by ICE, many of these family members were permanently separated through varying immigration statuses and then forced to fight their legal battles separately. Documents reflecting the number of unaccompanied children in ICE custody in the Seattle area is of great public concern and central to UWCHR’s research into the potential for human rights abuses and intolerable circumstances imposed on these individuals and their families.

96. In an attempt to obtain information related to that sought through ICE0128, UWCHR reached out to the ICE Community Relations Officer (“CRO”) with questions regarding the manner in which ICE detained family units in the Seattle area. In response, the CRO stated that she would not “be able to assist you with your requests for information” and simply referred UWCHR to FOIA. All further inquiries from UWCHR to the CRO were unavailing.

97. On February 16, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0128 and provided a tracking number (2021-ICFO-26512).



98. On November 1, 2021, UWCHR received an email from DHS, indicating that ICE0128 had been updated to a status of “Documents Delivered” even though no responsive documents had been delivered. DHS sent a subsequent email indicating that the status of ICE0128 had been updated to “Closed.”

99. To date, no responsive documents have been delivered in response to ICE0128.

100. On June 15, 2022, ICE sent a letter to UWCHR (dated October 29, 2021), indicating that ICE had conducted a search for records responsive to ICE0128, but that no responsive records were found.

101. On June 23, 2022, UWCHR filed an administrative appeal of ICE’s conclusion that it possessed no responsive records and concurrent closure. This appeal explained why the requested documents must be in ICE’s possession, custody, or control, and were subject to FOIA, and requested that ICE either produce the requested documents or provide some explanation of the scope of its search and its determination.

102. This appeal has not been acknowledged by DHS or ICE, and no tracking number has been provided.

103. As of the filing of this Complaint, UWCHR has not been notified of any determination with respect to this appeal, and ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0128.

104. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0128.

**3. No Appeal Determination: ICEAir-CAC Mission Invoices (FOIA Request ICE0078)**

105. On September 10, 2019, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

We are seeking a copy of mission invoice numbers 20181222A, submitted by vendor CAC, for ICE Air mission number 190244 in FY2019, and mission invoice number 20181203B, submitted by vendor CAC for ICE Air mission number 190003 in FY 2019. We are interested in all the materials submitted as part of these invoices, including any accounting of indirect costs.

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0078.”



1           106. UWCHR submitted this request as a means of better understanding the  
2 deportation industry in pursuit of its research into reports and accounts of human rights abuses  
3 that have taken place during these specific missions. One of these missions was a failed 2017  
4 flight to Somalia, which was waylaid in Dakar, Senegal, where it remained on the tarmac, with  
5 its deportee passengers bound and shackled, for almost 23 hours. Passengers on this flight have  
6 provided sworn testimony describing physical beatings, the use of straitjackets, verbal abuse and  
7 threats, and the denial of access to restrooms, forcing them to soil themselves in their seats. On  
8 other missions, passengers from Nepal, Bangladesh, and India reported abuses such as punching  
9 and kicking that left some passengers bloodied and crying. Passengers described deportees who  
10 resisted boarding the plane being given electric shocks and forcibly placed in body bags, then  
11 carried or tossed aboard. Shining a light on these reported abuses and the process of holding  
12 responsible parties accountable is the purpose behind UWCHR's FOIA request ICE0078.

13           107. On September 12, 2019, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0078 and provided a  
14 tracking number (2019-ICFO-58728).

15           108. On January 5, 2022, UWCHR received an email from ICE stating that responsive  
16 documents had been delivered and that the matter was closed, but to date no such documents  
17 have been delivered to UWCHR.

18           109. On January 12, 2022, and again on February 7, 2022, UWCHR emailed ICE  
19 inquiring as to the status of these documents and asking that they be redelivered.

20           110. After months of silence from ICE, UWCHR filed an appeal on April 2, 2022.

21           111. On April 2, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of UWCHR's appeal of ICE's  
22 inaction with respect to ICE0078, and ICE provided a tracking number (2022-ICAP-00517).

23           112. On August 12, 2022, UWCHR received an email from DHS, indicating that  
24 ICE0078 had been updated to a status of "Documents Delivered" even though no responsive  
25 documents had been delivered. Inexplicably, later that same day DHS sent a subsequent email  
26 indicating that the status of ICE0078 had been updated to "Closed."  
27

113. DHS' FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of the initial FOIA request is "Closed" but that status of the appeal of ICE0078 is "Assigned for Processing" and has an "Estimate Delivery Date" of May 7, 2022.

114. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents responsive to ICE0078 and has not made any determination with respect to the appeal.

115. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0078.

**4. No Appeal Determination: Northwest Detention Center Contract  
Discrepancy Forms (FOIA Request ICE0120)**

116. On August 21, 2020, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request sought (1) Contract Discrepancy Forms ("CDR") created by ICE employees for the Northwest Detention Center ("NWDC") and ICE processing center located in Tacoma, Washington, and operated by third-party contractor GEO; (2) documents relating to investigations undertaken by ICE in response to GEO's deficient performance as reported in CDRs; and (3) documents relating to written recommendations made in light of any such investigations. This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as "ICE0120."

117. The requested documents would shed light on the conditions within the NWDC regarding the sanitation of food and laundry, allegations of medical neglect, the use of solitary confinement, and the reporting of sexual assault and abuse.

118. On August 31, 2020, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0120 and provided a tracking number (2020-ICFO-81139).

119. On November 21, 2020, UWCHR visited DHS's FOIA website to check the status of this request and found it was listed as "on hold."

120. On November 23, 2020, ICE emailed UWCHR, stating that they had emailed UWCHR on September 16, 2020, asking that the request be narrowed to cover Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 rather than the broader timeframe UWCHR had originally requested. Contrary to ICE's representation, UWCHR had not received any email from ICE on September 16, 2020.

121. On November 23, 2020, UWCHR agreed to narrow the scope of ICE0120 to cover Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, per ICE's request.

122. On August 27, 2021, ICE sent a letter to UWCHR indicating that it was releasing 78 pages of responsive material, but only 5 pages were actually delivered to UWCHR.

123. On September 9, 2021, UWCHR appealed ICE's failure to provide all responsive documents that ICE claimed to have produced.

124. On October 7, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of UWCHR's appeal of ICE's inadequate production in response to ICE0120, and indicated that new searches could be conducted, and that information previously withheld may be releasable, and remanded the appeal to the ICE FOIA Office for processing, indicating that the ICE FOIA Office would respond directly to UWCHR. ICE provided a tracking number for the appeal (2021-ICAP-01227).

125. As of the filing of this Complaint, there has been no response to UWCHR from the ICE FOIA Office with respect to ICE0120.

126. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0120 that it has not produced in response to ICE0120.

#### **5. No Appeal Determination: MVM Invoices (ICE0164)**

127. On September 16, 2021, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

I am seeking copies of all the invoices (also commonly referred to as Monthly Billing Reports) the contractor MVM, Inc. sent to ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) from the fiscal year 2014 to the present. The record keeping of these documents by MVM, Inc. and ICE is mandated by the solicitation (solicitation # HSCEDM-14-R-00010) of Firm Fixed Price Federal Contract: HSCEDM-14-D-00006 and the solicitation (solicitation # 70CDCR20C00000006) of Definitive [sic] Contract: 70CDCR20C00000001. Both solicitations (attached here for your reference) (P. 18 & 31 for HSCEDM and P. 38 & 51 for 70CDCR) mandate that the contractor invoice ERO on a monthly basis for all transports that were completed the preceding month. Additionally, both solicitations (P. 52 for HSCEDM and P. 32 for 70CDCR) also mandate that all records kept by the contractor are subject to review by ICE CORs during the term of the contract and thereafter. I ask that the names of all personnel and individuals mentioned within the documents be excluded to protect the privacy of their personal and medical information. Please provide these records in electronic form.

1 This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as “ICE0164.”

2 128. Through this request, UWCHR seeks to investigate ICE’s relationship with the  
3 private company MVM, Inc., with which ICE has contracted to transport unaccompanied  
4 children and family units who have crossed the border from Canada into Washington State.  
5 Public sources have revealed that in 2019, MVM failed to provide adequate food, water, clean  
6 clothes, and hygienic conditions for these unaccompanied children and family units, and has kept  
7 unaccompanied children in these inadequate conditions for periods exceeding 24 hours. Despite  
8 ICE’s indicating that it would review its relationship with MVM as a private contractor, in 2019  
9 ICE renewed its contractual relationship with MVM for a period of five years.

10 129. Through ICE0164, UWCHR seeks information that will enable it to review the  
11 financial relationship between MVM and ICE, which will indicate whether ICE has made any  
12 deductions for MVM’s violation of performance standards through continued abuses.

13 130. On September 16, 2021, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0164 and provided a  
14 tracking number (2021-ICFO-39578).

15 131. On April 22, 2022, ICE responded to ICE0164, indicating that it had located no  
16 records responsive to the request.

17 132. On May 4, 2022, UWCHR appealed ICE’s failure to conduct an adequately  
18 thorough search in response to ICE0164.

19 133. On May 5, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of UWCHR’s appeal of ICE’s  
20 inadequate search with respect to ICE0164, and ICE provided a tracking number (2022-ICAP-  
21 00624).

22 134. DHS’ FOIA website, as of September 1, 2022, indicated that the status of the  
23 appeal of ICE0164 is “Assigned for Processing” and “Estimate Delivery Date” of August 8,  
24 2022.

25 135. As of the filing of this Complaint, ICE has not produced any documents  
26 responsive to ICE0164 and has not made any determination with respect to the appeal.

27 136. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0164.

**6. Appeal Improperly Denied: Standard Operating Procedures for ICE Air Operations (FOIA Request ICE0058)**

137. On March 24, 2019, Dr. Godoy made, on behalf of UWCHR, a written FOIA request to ICE. The request stated:

We request a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for flight schedulers and data management staff working for ICE Air Operations within ICE ERO. In its published response to the Office of the Inspector General's 2015 report criticizing the efficiency of ICE Air operations, ICE Management indicated that SOPs had already been promulgated and were in use at that time (*See* [https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/OIG\\_15-57\\_Apr15.pdf](https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/OIG_15-57_Apr15.pdf), p. 19).

This request to ICE is hereinafter referred to as "ICE0058."

138. Through this request, UWCHR seeks to investigate ICE's standard operating procedures for flight management, which would enable UWCHR to better understand why and how ICE makes decisions with regard to which individuals are deported via regular commercial airlines and which are deported via private charter. In response to the 2015 OIG report cited in ICE0058, ICE stated in writing that it had implemented a new set of Standard Operating Procedures. ICE0058 merely seeks these documents to which ICE has referred and which would form a key part of UWCHR's research into the potential for human rights abuses.

139. On April 5, 2019, ICE acknowledged receipt of ICE0058 and provided a tracking number (2019-ICFO-33298).

140. DHS' FOIA website, as of October 4, 2019, indicated that the status of ICE0058 was "Documents Added to Review Log" with an estimated delivery date of May 8, 2019.

141. DHS' FOIA website, as of January 22, 2020, indicated that the status of ICE0058 was "Closed." As of that date, though, UWCHR had received no documents responsive to ICE0058 and had not received any form of notification from ICE that the matter had been closed.

142. On January 22, 2020, UWCHR emailed ICE to inquire as to the silent closure of the matter, and on March 2, 2020, ICE responded saying the requested documents had already been delivered to UWCHR.

1 143. UWCHR immediately responded to ICE, informing ICE that UWCHR had not  
2 received any documents in response to ICE0058.

3 144. After hearing no further response from ICE, and with no other recourse, on  
4 April 2, 2022, UWCHR filed an appeal, challenging ICE's false claim that ICE had delivered  
5 documents in response to ICE0058.

6 145. On April 2, 2022, ICE acknowledged receipt of UWCHR's appeal of ICE's  
7 inaction with respect to ICE0058, and ICE provided a tracking number (2022-ICAP-00517).

8 146. DHS' FOIA website, as of April 11, 2022, indicated that the status of the appeal  
9 of ICE0058 was "Assigned for Processing" and estimated delivery date of May 7, 2022.

10 147. On May 26, 2022, ICE emailed UWCHR, indicating the status of the appeal was  
11 "In Process."

12 148. On July 12, 2022, without explanation or rationale, ICE sent two separate emails  
13 to UWCHR, one indicating that the initial request was now "Closed" and the other indicating  
14 that the appeal was now "Closed."

15 149. To date, UWCHR has received no documents in response to ICE0058 and no  
16 letter explaining what searches had been conducted (if any) in response to this FOIA request or  
17 why the appeal was denied.

18 150. On information and belief, ICE possesses documents responsive to ICE0058.

19 \* \* \*

20 151. DHS Defendants are wrongfully withholding records and information sought by  
21 the UWCHR. There is a substantial public interest in the disclosure of the documents and  
22 information requested. The DHS Defendants' refusal to release these documents and this  
23 information, believed to be within its custody and control, constitutes an abuse of the DHS  
24 Defendants' discretion and a violation of FOIA.

**FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

**Violation of FOIA by the DHS Defendants for Failure to Make Promptly Available  
the Records Sought by the UWCHR's requests.**

152. The UWCHR repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 151 above, inclusive.

153. The UWCHR has a legal right under FOIA to obtain the agency records and information it requested in FOIA requests associated with the following as described herein:  
(1) ICE0243, (2) ICE0248, (3) ICE0249, (4) ICE0045, (5) ICE0250, (6) ICE0245, (7) ICE0197, (8) ICE0237, (9) ICE0238, (10) ICE0093, (11) ICE0090, (12) ICE0128, (13) ICE0078, (14) ICE0120, (15) ICE0164, and (16) ICE0058.

154. There exists no legal basis for the DHS Defendants' failure to make these records and this information available to the public.

155. The DHS Defendants' failure to make promptly available the records and information sought by the UWCHR's requests violates FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(3)(A) and (a)(6)(A)(ii) and applicable regulations promulgated thereunder.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs request the Court award them the following relief:

A. Declare that the DHS Defendants have violated FOIA in its responses to Plaintiffs' FOIA requests as described herein;

B. Order the DHS Defendants to immediately disclose the requested records and information to Plaintiffs and enter an injunction prohibiting the DHS Defendants from continuing to withhold the requested records and information from the public;

C. Award Plaintiffs their reasonable costs and attorneys' fees;

D. Grant such further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DATED: September 20, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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